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Jordan
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(9)

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

May 15, 1953
9:30 a.m.

(R)

SUBJECT: Jordan

PLACE : Office of the Prime Minister, Amman

PARTICIPANTS: United States
Mr. Harold E. Stassen
Mr. Douglas MacArthur
Mr. Henry A. Byroade
Mr. M. E. Mattison
Mr. Andrew G. Lynch
Mr. Tracy R. Welling

Jordan
His Excellency Fawzi Mulqi, Prime Minister and Minister of Defense

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Wolf Jr. DATE 5/25/82
RDS-Per Ronzi Mulqi
TS AUTH Minister of Defense
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Mr. Stassen called on the Prime Minister, who also holds the Defense Portfolio, accompanied by Mr. MacArthur, Mr. Byroade, Mr. Mattison, Mr. Welling and Mr. Lynch. Mr. Stassen was welcomed effusively by the Prime Minister who stated rather airily that there were no outstanding political or economic problems in the way of Jordania-American friendship. He emphasized that his Cabinet was young and dynamic and that five of its members were graduates of the American University in Beirut. He added that Jordan wanted all the economic help it could get from the United States as it was a poor country struggling for its existence. Point IV was useful and much appreciated.

Mr. Stassen then said that it seemed to him there were some very serious political problems which demanded solution before Jordan could be healthy economically. The Prime Minister said that he had pretty well covered the political field with the Secretary in his forty-minute conversation with him. Mr. Stassen replied that he was primarily interested in the economic side. The Prime Minister then emphasized the plight of the refugees and brought in strongly the need for the implementation of the Yarmuk Project. He had heard from several sources, he said, that there were difficulties in the United States in the carrying out of the project. He and his Government felt deeply the necessity for the Yarmuk. Point IV had up to the present been helpful, as had been certain small Wadi projects which the Government had in hand and he mentioned the Zerka irrigation scheme inaugurated by the King on May 13. These, however, were minor projects which had little effect on the general picture. What was required, he said, was a major undertaking that would settle large numbers of the unfortunate refugees and his feeling was that the Yarmuk Project was the answer. He added that immediate financial assistance to Jordan was essential. If it did not come now its effectiveness would be lost as the economy of the whole country was suffering from the presence of the refugees. Economic aid should, in his opinion, benefit the whole community, not a single class such as refugees alone.

Mr. Stassen then pointed out to the Prime Minister that, bad as the plight of the refugees was, there were persons living under Soviet domination whose case was far worse. He felt that this should be realized. It was Mr. Stassen's opinion also that there should be peace in the area at the earliest possible moment. Aid could be more easily given and more profitably used in an atmosphere where peace prevailed.

The Prime

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The Prime Minister took some exception to this view. Throughout the talk he emphasized the importance of keeping economic aid, whether Point IV aid or otherwise, entirely separate from the political situation. There was a tendency, he said, to feel that the United States made economic aid march with political acquiescence. People resented this. The implication was clear - although the reporting officer does not recollect that this statement was made - that if American economic aid was to be made contingent upon peace with Israel, Jordan wanted no part of it.

The Prime Minister then turned to UNRWA. In his view, Mr. Blandford's conception of UNRWA was the wrong one. He knew, he said, that 70% of the money of UNRWA was American money and from his point of view UNRWA was, therefore, an American organization. Its present terms of reference were altogether too limiting. It was not enough to keep the unhappy refugees at a bare subsistence level. Something must be done for them which would give them lands to till and enable them to make decent livings. Again, to him the Yarmuk scheme was a major answer to the problem.

Mr. Byroade interjected a remark to the effect that he felt that there was some misunderstanding on the part of the Prime Minister with regard to the Yarmuk. There was, he said, no idea in the United States of rejecting the scheme but rather a need to examine all aspects of it with great care. Mr. Stassen said that while it could not be said that UNRWA was an American organization, it was correct to say that the Yarmuk was an American project. Mr. Byroade added that the project had not as yet received the complete approval of the United States Government but on the other hand it was entirely wrong to assume that the plan had been rejected. It was necessary, Mr. Byroade said, to consider the plan in relation to the whole area and the economic development of the whole area. The Prime Minister then stated that he could not understand the preoccupation with Israeli interests in the waters of the Yarmuk. The Yarmuk was a river in which two countries had primary interest - Jordan and Syria. It was not an Israeli river. The Jordan River, however, was of interest to both Jordan and Israel and what Israel did to the upper waters of the of the Jordan was of intense interest to this country. The discussion became somewhat general at this point on the question of the possibility of Israeli diversion of upper Jordan waters causing Lake Tiberius to become a salt sea.

Mr. Stassen then told the Prime Minister of the American philosophy toward economic aid to other countries. He explained that the United States felt it to be in its own best interests to help other countries become economically healthy. We had found, he said, that when our neighboring countries were in economic difficulties there were inevitably repercussions on the American economy. We firmly believed that by helping other countries we were also doing a good turn to ourselves. He pointed out the difference between this approach to the problem and the Soviet approach. The Soviets went into other countries with the view to taking things away from these countries which would benefit Soviet Russia. The Soviets deprived other countries of a healthy economic existence in order to benefit the Soviet Union. We, too, wished to benefit ourselves but believed that the best way of doing it was by benefitting the other person.

The time period for the interview having come to an end, Mr. Stassen and his group took their leave.